

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by Emperor Akihito of Japan

April 24, 2014

Good evening. *Konbanwa*. Your Majesties, I thank you for the extraordinary welcome that you have given to me and my delegation today, and I thank you for your gracious hospitality tonight.

Prime Minister Abe and Mrs. Abe, distinguished guests and friends, It has been nearly 50 years since my mother first brought me to Japan, but I have never forgotten the kindness that the Japanese people showed me as a 6-year-old boy far away from home. I remain grateful for the welcome that Your Majesties gave me when I returned here as President, on the 20th anniversary of your ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne.

And I am deeply honored to be with you as a guest of state tonight, which is a reflection of the great friendship between our two peoples.

It's also very humbling. I stand here as the 44th President of the United States. Your Majesty is the 125th Emperor of Japan. [*Laughter*] And your family has embodied the spirit of the Japanese people across more than two millennia. And we feel that spirit here tonight in His Majesty's commitment to achieving peace and the resilience of the Japanese people who, despite difficult decades, despite the tragedies of 3 years ago, continue to inspire the world with your strength and discipline and dignity—your *hinkaku*.

And I saw that spirit today. In the glory of the Meiji Shrine, I experienced the beauty of a religious ceremony rooted in Japan's ancient past. In my work with Prime Minister Abe, we have strengthened our alliance for today, an alliance that will never be broken. And in the eager students that I met and the remarkable technologies that I saw, I glimpsed the future our nations can forge together.

Through all of this, although we are separated by vast oceans, our peoples come together every day in every realm. We create and build together, sparking new innovations for a changing world. We study and research together, unlocking new discoveries to cure disease and save lives. We go to the far corners of the Earth together, to keep the peace and feed the hungry. And we go to space together to understand the mysteries of the universe. We stand together in moments of joy, as when Japanese baseball players help propel America's teams to victory. And we stand together in moments of difficulty and pain, as we did 3 years ago.

Your Majesty, we will never forget how, in those trying days, you spoke from this palace directly to the people of this nation. And I would like to conclude by recalling the spirit of your message then, because it also remains our wish tonight, for the friendship and alliance between our two peoples.

May we never give up hope, may we always take care of each other, and may we continue to live strong for tomorrow.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 p.m. at the Imperial Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Empress Michiko of Japan.

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